

REVIEWS



70 PREDATOR: HUNTING GROUNDS

Only one thing stands between the Fireteam and da choppa...

OPM SCORES

GOLD AWARD

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

GOLD AWARD

Awarded to a game that's brilliantly executed on every level, combining significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics and lasting appeal.

EDITOR'S AWARD

PlayStation.
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EDITOR'S AWARD

Not at the very highest echelon, but this is a game that deserves recognition and special praise based on its ambition, innovation or other notable achievement.

10 INCREDIBLE

The kind of phenomenal experience rarely seen in a console generation.

9 OUTSTANDING

Unreservedly brilliant - this should be in every collection.

8 VERY GOOD

A truly excellent game, marred by just a few minor issues.

7 GOOD

A great concept unfulfilled or the familiar done well, but still well worth playing.

6 DECENT

Fun in parts, flawed in others, but more right than wrong.

5 AVERAGE

What you expect and little more, this is for devotees only.

4 BELOW AVERAGE

Any bright ideas are drowning in a sea of bugs or mediocrity.

3 POOR

A seriously flawed game with little merit on any level.

2 AWFUL

Disgraceful: the disc would be more beneficial as a coaster.

1 HORRIFIC

Own this and you'll be swiftly, justifiably, exiled from society.

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A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a Predator helmet. The helmet is metallic and features a large, dark, oval-shaped visor. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, emphasizing the intricate details and textures of the helmet's surface. The background is blurred, showing hints of other mechanical parts.

"WHEN IT CLICKS,
THIS ONLINE SHOOTER
FEELS LIKE THE MOVIE."

070

While not perfect,
Predator: Hunting Grounds
manages to evoke the
spirit of the '87 movie.

PREY ITS GOOD

@lanDean74

PREDATOR: HUNTING GROUNDS

One ugly mother*blorp*er or worth sticking around for?



INFO
FORMAT PS4
ETA OUT NOW
PUB SONY
DEV ILLFONIC

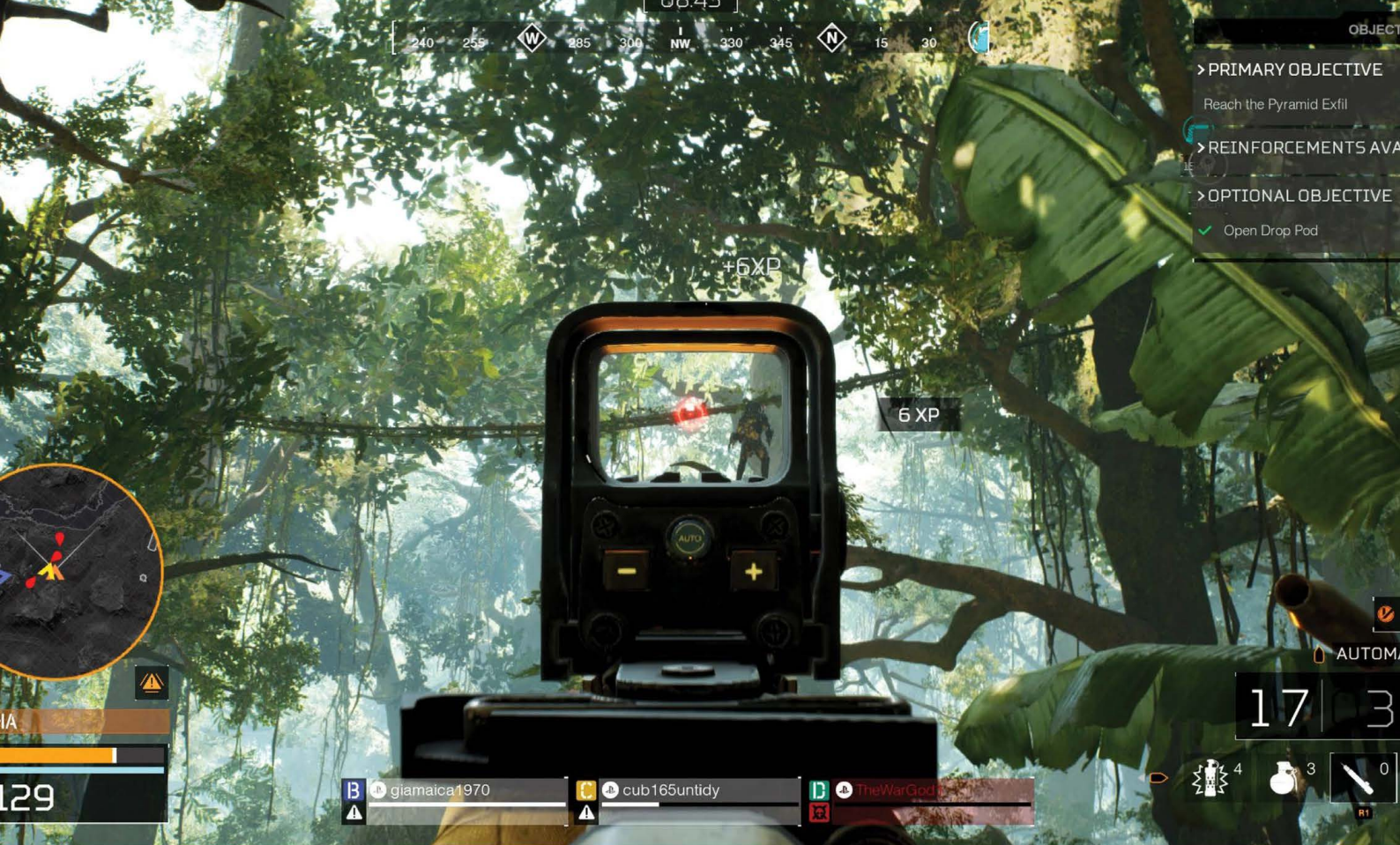
Yes, you can ping “Get to the chopper!” at your teammates as a plasma bolt fizzles from the tree line, the tribal drums roll in the background, and you pause to cake yourself in mud. Any advantage against the famous alien threat is to be embraced eagerly. When it clicks, in your duel to the death against the odds this online shooter feels like the movie you remember.

There’s clearly a lot of love for the source material in Predator: Hunting Grounds. This affection permeates everything from the title screen to the thunderous soundtrack that builds in momentum as you approach a mission’s drop zone. The cutscene shows your custom character eyeballing others’ maker-heroes just as Dutch and the gang did in 1987; sadly there’s no option to tell a sexual tyrannosaurus joke. But this ability to drag the film’s mood onto PS4 screens doesn’t give Illfonic a free pass on the missteps that hold this asymmetrical multiplayer back from being the perfect Predator game.

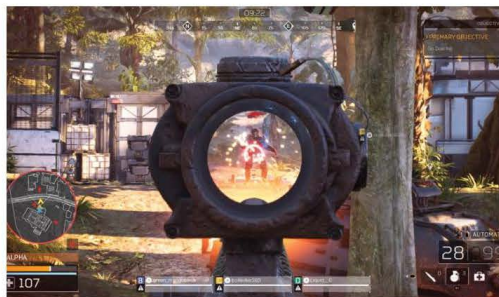
PUSHING PENCILS?

The setup is simple – refreshingly so in a world of battle royales. As one member of a four-player spec ops Fireteam you need to venture into the jungle to perform a series of randomised missions. These comprise multiple parts and involve infiltrating enemy camps, sabotaging machinery, stealing documents, and more. Crucially, the stealthier you are, the harder it is for the Predator to discover your whereabouts.

On the flipside, as the Predator you’re dropped into a random spot on the same map and must hunt down the spec ops team. Along the way you



Right Enemy AI rarely poses a problem; it's the alien in the trees you need to worry about.



Left Each weapon has a rank you can level up with XP, which in turn unlocks new attachments.

▶ can pick off AI soldiers for bonus XP. Controlling the alien hunter is incredibly fun. Moving through the trees is as easy as pushing forwards and tapping **X** to jump to highlighted branches. Leaping to set points by holding **RT** ensures you can drop into a group of soldiers, slice and dice, and hop out of danger back into the tree canopy.

The balancing of these two approaches is impressive. As the Predator, armed with cloaking tech, infrared vision, and all manner of blasters, swords, and a fun mobility-reducing net, you'd think the odds would always be on your side, but if the spec ops players work as a team they can easily defeat the Predator. Using mud (find a puddle and hold **LB** to get messy) can mask you from the creature's sensors. Up close you can even parry the Predator's claw strikes, but it takes timing and nerves.

Yet when you come up against a well-versed Predator-player you feel vulnerable, and a little terrified of what may come out of the trees. It could start with those eerie, high-pitched clicking noises the alien makes, or you might hear a

mimicked ping of spec ops chatter, or maybe you'll glimpse the shimmer of the creature's silhouette just before a plasma bolt crackles towards you.

TIME TO DIE

These moments of filmic exhilaration come with a number of problems. The game, as we write, is plagued by matchmaking problems. While it can take 30 seconds (good) to get a game as the Fireteam, it's over five minutes to be able to hunt as the Predator (very bad). The jungle is often no place for a seasoned soldier either. If it's not the screen-stuttering drops in framerate when the action heats up, it's the sluggish enemy AI that fails to react to your presence.

When these AI troops do fight back it's often to stay rooted and soak up bullets like a PS3-era enemy. Realistically the AI opponents are here as a distraction, to force you to show your hand and alert the

Predator. They're a tool in the game's sandbox, a means to ignite the hunt, and taken as such their complacency can be (just about) overlooked.

The directness of the setup can mean the core loop of the game becomes familiar very quickly. Your trek to accomplish given tasks always results in a duel with the Predator, and playing as the prey tends to offer fewer tactical choices, other than group up or run for your life to 'da choppa'.

However, there is a sprightly upgrade path to take, ensuring there's always another reason to head back into the jungle. Earning XP for completing mission objectives, your number of kills, defeating the Predator, or just surviving, unlocks new shaders as well as weapons, items, and perks. These enable improved aim, damage, and in the case of our favoured Pig In Shit, speed up the sensor-masking mud-smearing, and can be game-changers.

"THE DIRECTNESS OF THE SETUP CAN MEAN THE CORE LOOP BECOMES FAMILIAR."



Above The alien's tech is fun to play with – if you get the chance.

Right These jungle maps offer a number of hidden areas. All are handy hiding places.



Above Predator's nets slow you down, and if you don't escape it'll take a trophy.

Different classes' stats vary in the levels of health, armour, and movement they offer but also in 'weight', ensuring you can't over-power a class. Tactics are as simple as your preferred loadout.

As the alien menace you've greater scope to experiment; whether it's through unlocking new kit or simply refining the approaches to taking down your prey in new creative ways.

OK BOOMER

Just when matches veer into being routine, little divergences begin to show themselves, ensuring you must think on your feet and shift focus. For example, a defeated Predator will start its self-destruct process, giving you two choices: run for your life or stay and defuse the alien's mini-nuke. Either way your mission is over, so often it's best to keep the Predator at bay long enough to accomplish your primary goals for more XP.

Whatever the outcome, the many film-referencing cutscenes and audio cues help sell every moment – there's even a bicep-testing bro-shake straight out of the film's opening crawl to enjoy. When you catch sight of your teammates spraying the jungle with bullets, tree branches splintering into wood chips, anxiety dissipating in a bullet-strewing exhalation, it evokes the film perfectly.

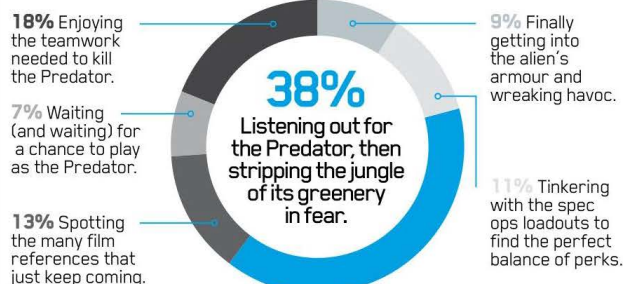
It's these moments that ensure you'll return to Predator: Hunting Grounds for short spurts of fun, even though there are numerous flaws holding it back. It's those indulgent nods and winks that help keep this one on target.

VERDICT

Predator: Hunting Grounds' fun procession of film references and solid gameplay loop distract from the many flaws that hold it back from being an essential online shooter. Ian Dean

THE OPM BREAKDOWN

WHAT YOU DO IN... PREDATOR: HG



STAT PACK

100	3	330	4
Ranks to level up towards – then you can unlock the Elite outfit to showcase your gym guns.	Semi-open world maps to explore and master. Learning their pathways can save your life.	The average time in seconds it took us to get a match as the Predator. This really puts a dent in the fun.	Classes to unlock. Each has unique stats, including the 'weight' of perks you can assign.

HOW TO... CAPTURE THE PREDATOR'S BODY



Take down the Predator, by teaming up. Once it's defeated, the creature begins laughing. Now you can press **△** to enter a bomb defusal minigame. Match the symbols to disarm the mini-nuke. Defend the Predator's body as the local militia close in to earn your XP.

LOVING/HATING



SCENE-STEALER

There are constant rewards for anyone who loves the movie, including this mini-nuke cinematic if you survive the explosion.



REPEAT REWARDS

The game throws a lot of lootboxes your way – roughly one every three matches. The downside is there's a lot of repetition.

TROPHY CABINET



BRONZE

Cover yourself in mud 50 times to bag this trophy. You'll need to, as it's the only way to mask the Predator's vision.



SILVER

You'll need to play as the Predator 50 times for this one. Given the slow matchmaking, this one's tough.



GOLD

Kill five AI enemies with one explosion to earn this Gold gong. With so many red barrels around, it's not hard.